



**Opening Statement by Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC) | Hearing
on Evidence-Based Policymaking**

Good morning, and welcome to this morning's hearing on evidence-based policymaking. As a part of this discussion, we will hear about the importance of education research and student privacy protection.

There is nothing new about the federal government's use of data to better understand its citizens and how government programs serve them. In fact, even as the U.S. Constitution was being debated and ratified, there were calls for a national census in order for the new government to have an understanding of the population of the new republic.

While the federal government has changed the way it collects and uses data since its founding, data remains a major resource to drive informed policymaking decisions.

Both Republicans and Democrats agree that use of good research and evidence allows us to make good policy.

When policymakers can see the methods and results, then we have a better understanding of what works and what doesn't work for policymaking decisions in the future.

More importantly, when policymakers can point to data and evidence behind their decisions, there is an added layer of accountability to policy.

We need to know what works for students who need a high-quality education, and for workers who are seeking the skills they need to succeed.

Today's hearing will specifically focus on the need for research in the education field to promote good evidence-based decision making, while also exploring how that is done while protecting student privacy.

In 2017, the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking released its report on how to improve the federal government's use of evidence for a more effective government.

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Within that report, the Commission called for improvements to secure access to private and confidential data, while also modernizing privacy protection for evidence-building research.

Education research can be a powerful tool to help our students, but that information should not come at the cost of a student's private and personal information.

Currently, two primary laws govern use of education research and student data privacy protections. The Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA), in addition to other things, authorizes the Department of Education's research arm. The second is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) that protects student privacy by establishing parents' and students' rights to access their student records and limits who else can see those records. The changing nature of data use and technology for educational purposes, the use of evidence and research in policymaking, and the public's consistent call for privacy protections over student data are why we are here today. We need to have a discussion on what's working, what could be improved, and the issues faced by students, families, educators, and researchers. While this is not a hearing about those bills, I believe what we learn today will help us as we look to update and modernize them.

We have gathered a diverse group of witnesses who will give us their perspectives on how education research is used to drive evidence-based policymaking.

I look forward to the discussion today, and hope this committee continues to be a leader in its use of evidence-based policymaking.

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